

Caddo Lake drawbridge turns 100, thanks to Mooringsport resident

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The historic Caddo Lake drawbridge will turn 100 years old in 2014. The vertical lift bridge in Mooringsport, La., was built under the authority of the Caddo Parish Police Jury during the town's oil boom era. Ahead of World War II, it was used in the Louisiana Maneuvers to mimic a bridge under siege. When the state decided to replace the drawbridge in the late '80s, Mooringsport resident Darren Guin began an earnest quest to save it.

"I was raised in the small town and I always thought the bridge was unique. I had never seen one like it. When I heard it was going to be torn down, I thought there's got to be something here, and it turned out I was right," Guin said.

The drawbridge was designed by the prolific American bridge builder John Alexander Low Waddell. The renowned civil engineer designed more than 100 moveable bridges during his life. Many are historic landmarks. This bridge was never motorized and most of the gears are still intact, according to Guin. Today a footbridge and closed to vehicles, Guin recalls his fight to keep it from being dismantled and sold for scrap.

"This went all the way to the federal level. U.S. senators became involved. The Federal Highway Administration became involved. The State of Louisiana had never done a historic bridge inventory, which was a requirement for states to receive federal highway money. This triggered them to do their very first one," Guin said.

Guin finds that Mooringsport residents take pride in their drawbridge that was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1996. Guin hopes the bridge's centennial will be celebrated at local festivals next year. He lives just a few blocks from the bridge he saved, and his favorite thing is to see people stop and take pictures of it. He compiled more information at caddolakedrawbridge.com.



In 1914, the Caddo Lake Drawbridge replaced a ferry that transported people across Caddo Lake at Mooringsport.



Darren Guin of Mooringsport, La., led an effort to save the historic Caddo Lake drawbridge.